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Lake County is using cutting edge technology to combat traffic congestion. The new Intelligent Transportation System uses cameras to both track problems and help correct them. Intelligent Transportation Systems have monitored traffic on expressways and tollways, but the traffic management center in Lake County is the first of its kind in the Chicago area to use cameras to monitor and control traffic at suburban intersections.

"We have video cameras that detect traffic, and that allows us to time the traffic signals better; we also have a set of video cameras that monitor the traffic," said Marty Buehler, Lake Co. director of transportation.

For instance, a camera at Aptakisic and Buffalo Grove Road automatically shifts positions to check for congestion or crashes. The camera detects the speed of the traffic and computes traffic density. If heavy traffic is detected, the system can automatically adjust the signal timing at several intersections until traffic flow is back to normal.

The data is also linked to 911 centers and regional traffic centers. By spring, there will be 74 traffic detection cameras and 24 with pan, tilt and zoom capability. Critics worry about the "Big Brother" aspect.

"There were some limited concerns, but I think the dominant feeling was we want the government to work in ways that reduced the time we spend commuting to work, picking up the kids from school, and this does," said Rep. Mark Kirk, (R) 10th District.

Another component of the traffic management center is highway advisory radio. Drivers can get information, while they're in their car on traffic problems from construction to crashes to special events at key intersections in the system.

By next month, traffic problems detected from the cameras will be automatically input, and broadcast on 1620 am in Lake County. Portable message board signs will also alert drivers to trouble spots. Because several of the intersections are state routes, Lake County will coordinate with IDOT before the automated traffic system is fully functional later this year. The initial phase of the intelligent transportation center cost almost \$7 million. About \$3 million more in federal funds have been secured to begin the next phase to expand the network to more include more roads.